



## *AOT in Action*

### ***TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!***

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

#### **A Message from the Director:**

Good morning.

Wednesday kicks off our 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism at the Arizona Biltmore Resort and Spa. I'm very excited about this year's conference. We're expecting nearly 600 tourism professionals to join us and I know that everyone will benefit from this year's dynamic program. From our innovative breakout sessions to our exceptional speakers, participants will surely walk away with great new knowledge about our industry.

The conference is set to open with our annual golf tournament and then head into the STARS Gala event hosted by the Arizona Hotel & Lodging Association and the Arizona Restaurant & Hospitality Association. On Thursday, I look forward to presenting the "State of the Industry" speech to share with you Arizona's year-end tourism numbers for 2006. Thursday also marks the beginning of the informative breakout sessions where you will be able to learn the latest and greatest information about trends, products and initiatives in the tourism industry. Thursday's lunch is definitely not to be missed, as AOT's Deputy Director Kelly Paisley joins me in presenting the Governor's Tourism Awards, which is often the most fun and most rewarding part of this conference. Friday we will wrap up the conference with internationally renowned speaker Harvey Mackay.

I look forward to seeing everyone out at the Arizona Biltmore Resort and Spa to help celebrate Arizona's tourism industry.

Have a great week.

*Margie R. Emmenau*

Margie A. Emmermann  
Director  
Arizona Office of Tourism

## **AOT News Flash**

### **Another Great Year for Painted Cliffs Welcome Center**

AOT's Painted Cliffs Welcome Center, located on Interstate 40 near the Arizona/ New Mexico border, had another outstanding year assisting more than 130,000 visitors to Arizona. That is a five percent increase from last year. The Welcome Center provided them with valuable information and insight into Arizona and its many attractions. Painted Cliffs' visitation has continued to grow since FY03. This fiscal year surpassed last year's visitations numbers, setting a new record for the Welcome Center.

### **Save the Date: The 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Arizona Governor's Conference on Tourism**

This year's 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Arizona Governor's Conference on Tourism is July 11-13 at the Arizona Biltmore Resort and Spa. The program will be a dynamic mix of fresh industry information and resources that can help you plan for another year of marketing Arizona to audiences around the world. Breakout sessions and speakers will teach you how to take tourism marketing and promotion to a new level. With so many exciting opportunities happening nationally, the Arizona Office of Tourism and its association partners are committed to bringing you the most up-to-date tools available for tourism professionals. For more information and to register for the event, please visit [www.aztourismconference.com](http://www.aztourismconference.com).

## **Trippin' with AOT**

### **World Travel Market 2007 – Trade Show Opportunity**

AOT invites you to participate in World Travel Market 2007 in London, England from November 12th to November 15th. WTM is the premier, global event for the travel industry as well as the largest travel trade show in the United Kingdom. AOT's attendance at the show is extremely important because it raises Arizona awareness with travel industry and media professionals, generates sales leads and maintains status as a key player in the tourism industry. In 2006, there were more than 46,000 travel industry professionals and media in attendance. The cost to participate is \$2,000 U.S. for the primary delegate and \$500 U.S. for the second delegate. Please contact Loretta Belonio for further information at 602-364-3725 or via e-mail at [lbelonio@azot.gov](mailto:lbelonio@azot.gov).

### **Participate in La Cumbre in 2007**

La Cumbre is the premier travel industry conference for the sales and marketing of travel to the United States from Latin America. This year it will be held September 5-7, 2007 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The event features a structured, computer-matched marketplace enabling buyers and suppliers to meet during scheduled appointments. Approximately 500 buyers and 90 press members from throughout Latin America will attend this event. Barbara Jackson, AOT's Mexico representative will attend on Arizona's behalf. If you would like to participate in La Cumbre as part of the Arizona Office of Tourism booth please contact Kristy Swanson for more information at 602-364-3696 or via e-mail at [kswanson@azot.gov](mailto:kswanson@azot.gov). The cost for registration is \$1,000 for DMOs and \$750 for tourism suppliers. Travel expenses and shipping are extra.

## **Register Now for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Arizona Showcase in Hermosillo**

AOT will hold the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Arizona Showcase October 3-4, 2007 in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. This event promotes fall and holiday shopping, attractions and accommodations throughout the State. This year there will be a special emphasis on weddings. On the first night of the event, a trade show for travel agents and media representatives will be coordinated. The second night of the event will highlight a charity fashion show with local models—specifically targeting high income families and individuals with a strong propensity to travel. The cost to participate varies from \$800–\$2,000 depending on type of supplier and level of participation, plus travel expenses. Sponsorships are also available. The deadline to participate is September 1, 2007. Early booking discounts apply. Please contact Kristy Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via e-mail at [kswanson@azot.gov](mailto:kswanson@azot.gov).

## **Japanese Receptive Operator Sales Mission Expanded in 2007**

The Annual Japanese Receptive Operator Sales Mission is scheduled to take place in Los Angeles, CA on August 2, 2007. This mission is an organized function that introduces Arizona suppliers and DMOs to the California-based travel professionals of major Japanese tour companies. The event features destination development seminars/workshops as well as a marketplace. The participation fee is \$250 for suppliers and \$350 for DMOs, plus travel expenses. In 2007 there will also be expanded opportunities for Arizona suppliers only including sales calls on Friday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> and a golf tournament on Saturday, August 4<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Osamu Hoshino for more information at 801-266-3345 or via e-mail at [ohoshino@comcast.net](mailto:ohoshino@comcast.net). Space is limited and the deadline for participation is July 20, 2007.

## **Industry News**

### **Blackstone to Buy Hilton for \$20 Billion**

Hilton Hotels has agreed to an all-cash buyout from The Blackstone Group in a \$20.1 billion deal that would instantly make Blackstone the world's largest hotel owner. The private equity group said it would combine cash from its real estate and corporate equity funds to buy all outstanding Hilton shares for \$47.50 each, a 32 percent premium over Tuesday's closing stock price. The companies valued the deal at \$26 billion including debt. Hilton's board approved the terms Tuesday. Hilton owns or operates 2,800 hotels and 480,000 rooms in 76 countries and territories and includes such brands as Doubletree, Embassy Suites and Hampton Inn. Among Hilton's premier hotels is the Waldorf-Astoria in New York. Blackstone said it intends to invest heavily in Hilton. (*Pages C1, New York Times, 7/4; D1, Washington Post, 7/4; Chicago Tribune.com/Business, 7/4; AP*)

### **Travel Agent Business on the Upswing**

The latest to find that travel agents are not only alive but possibly thriving is *The New York Times*, which wrote: "Yes, they still exist, those people who until the mid-1990s booked about 75 percent of airline tickets and had as much power as God but then seemed at risk of extinction. In fact, many travel agents — or travel specialists, as they are now known — say they have seen an increase in business in the last year or so." One major reason is that travelers say they do not have the time or energy to scour the internet for the best deals. Agent clients also crave a personal touch that a disembodied voice in a call center cannot provide. The story quoted a 60-year-old man who two years ago bought an airline ticket at Priceline.com. The day before he was to leave, he caught a vicious cold. He spent hours on the phone, he said, trying to find someone to help him change his flight. But he was unsuccessful and ended up throwing the tickets away. "Going to the Internet is an absolute nightmare," he said. That is when he called his former travel agent at the Tzell Travel Group in Manhattan. "She's available for phone calls. She returns calls," he said.

"They take really good care of me, despite the fact that I'm not General Motors." Allen Kay, a spokesman for the Travel Industry Association, a trade group based in Washington, said travel agencies had realigned in the face of competition from online booking. "Travel agencies have gone back to their roots and focused on expertise," he said. This is not to say that online travel booking is on the decline. Henry H. Harteveldt, a travel analyst at Forrester Research, said about 77 million of the nearly 141 million American adults who use the Internet and take at least one trip a year will buy their tickets online this year, up from 62.4 million in 2005. He estimated that 64 million people buy all their travel offline. But, he said, "as the airline centers have scaled back their call centers and it's harder to get help from the travel providers themselves, finding a travel agent who is knowledgeable and takes the burden off the customer is more valuable than ever." He said bricks-and-mortar travel agents continue to outsell online travel agents for most airlines and hotels. *(Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter)*

### **Women Travelers: Fore More Golf**

What do women travelers want? More active and more luxurious trips, says a poll of American Express travel agents. More than a third of all of the agents polled said more women than ever are looking for golf activities. Why golf? Some women say because it promotes business contacts and networking. Whatever the reasons, more agents are looking at finding more female business on the links. *(Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter)*

### **TripAdvisor Names Top 10 US Attractions**

TripAdvisor announced the top 10 attractions in the US, according to traveler popularity and TripAdvisor editors. And the No. 1 place was no surprise: Orlando, Florida. "Although Orlando's attractions top the list again in 2007, there are some newcomers to the top ten this year, including Central Park, Alcatraz and the Bellagio Fountains," said Michele Perry, director of communications for TripAdvisor. "Between Universal Studios, Sea World, Discovery Cove and the home of a particularly famous mouse, Orlando is the Mecca of attractions," TripAdvisor said. The runner-up at No. 2 was Cirque du Soleil in Las Vegas for its "contemporary, hip circus." No. 3 was a 60-mile stretch connecting Hana to Maui, in Hawaii, which the site says "stuns with its spectacular views and natural adornments, including magnificent waterfalls, beaches and the 'Seven Sacred Pools' - just make sure to keep your eyes on the road." No 4 was the Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona, described as "one of the 'Seven Natural Wonders of the World,'" and "perhaps the most famous hiking destination in the US with outstanding hiking trails to the base of the canyon." Other on the list were Central Park in New York City, the former Alcatraz prison in San Francisco, the Top of the Rock Observation Deck in New York, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, The "water-ful" fountains at the Bellagio in Las Vegas, and Animal Kingdom at the San Diego Zoo, which has more than 4,000 rare and endangered animals and the largest collection of Giant Pandas outside of mainland China. *(Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter)*